

Testimony of Robert Burns, Executive Director
Mattatuck Museum
March 2, 2015
Connecticut General Assembly
Appropriations Committee

RE: H.B. No. 6824 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2017, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR AND OTHER PROVISIONS RELATED TO REVENUE

Chairwoman Bye, Chairwoman Walker, members of the committee, my name is Bob Burns and I am director of the Mattatuck Museum located in Waterbury. I would like to offer the following comments on H.B. 6824, An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June Thirtieth 2017 and Making Appropriations Therefor and Other Provisions Related to Revenue.

The Mattatuck Museum is a member of a consortium of seven independent leading art museums in Connecticut formed in 2013 – the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum in Ridgefield; the Bruce Museum in Greenwich; the Florence Griswold Museum in Old Lyme; the Hill-Stead Museum in Farmington; the Lyman Allyn Art Museum in New London; and New Britain Museum of American Art in New Britain. Our seven museums offer some of the most exciting and stimulating exhibitions to be found anywhere. Our holdings consist of fine and decorative art treasures of incalculable value. Together we enhance the state's identity as a cultural hub, its attractiveness as a tourism destination, and the unparalleled quality of life found here.

First and foremost I want to thank the Administration and the Legislature for including the Consortium as an item in the budget last year. The Consortium was appropriated \$525,000. What is unique about our group is that we have agreed to divide the funding equally between our seven institutions, focusing on unity to attain the flexibility and consistency of steady funding that will enable us to better plan exhibits and programs while strategically targeting our marketing efforts to maximize the use of these funds.

For the Mattatuck these funds have enabled us to expand our exhibition schedule and significantly increase our marketing budget -- providing increased exposure to museum exhibitions and programs across the State into New York and New England. We have also earmarked funds to support additional part-time, professional visitor services staff. In the past the museum has relied upon volunteers but moving to paid staff has helped to improve our visitor experience.

Collectively our group represents a significant impact for Connecticut in creating jobs, attracting visitors and increasing State revenue. Our museums employ people locally, purchase goods and

services from within our communities, and market and promote our regions. Every year we are host to hundreds of thousands of visitors from New England, New York and New Jersey and across the country. Our visitors stay in hotels, eat in restaurants and purchase goods in our shops.

We fully understand that these are very difficult financial times for the state. We believe that we have shown that by working together (instead of competing) we have achieved an efficient as well as an effective way for the State to make a relatively small investment that will bring a very good return.

Utilizing the AFTA economic prosperity calculator we have determined that our consortium has a collective economic impact of more than twenty-two million dollars annually or an average economic impact on our respective regions of over \$3.2 million. Clearly the States investment in our group is money well spent.

My colleagues and I hope to have the opportunity to continue to build upon our already significant contribution to Connecticut's "creative" economy and ask that funding for the Consortium remain included under DECD Conservation and Development in this new Biennium Budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this request with you on this important issue.